

**Mayor's column for  
The Enterprise  
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When I go into the elementary schools to talk to the kids about being mayor, they always ask, "What do you do?" I always have answers for them, but today, as I turned on my computer and saw 56 emails, it occurred to me that the screen told a story in itself. So for this month, I'm going to give you a glimpse of what topics are coming across my computer screen these days.

Many Edmonds residents use email to correspond with me concerning a problem they are having involving the City. And I, in turn, use email to contact staff to work on the problem. The two concerns that caught my eye this morning were a backed-up sewer that the resident believed was caused by tree roots from a City-owned tree, and a possible landslide concern that could be fixed with a retaining wall.

The City Council is holding budget workshops at this time, and there are many emails concerning certain aspects of the budget, property taxes, and the cost of living, as well as questions from Councilmembers of various staff members.

We have been negotiating with our bargaining units over the past few months and things are starting to work themselves out. So much time and preparation go into these talks, and we schedule numerous meetings to make sure that management is on the same page. One of the emails that I have is a five-year review of our health care costs. I know you see it in your own insurance premiums, but in 2000 our insurance package for a family of four cost \$700 and today that cost is \$1,200. One more thing to factor into the bargaining process.

Several emails have a "terrorism" subject line. I represent all Snohomish County elected officials on the County Homeland Security Strategy Committee and consequently receive a fair amount of correspondence. The latest email is confirmation of my attendance at a workshop scheduled for this month.

As I have worked on this throughout the day as time has allowed, I realize how many times I actually receive and send emails during the course of my work day. It's such a relief to be able to handle situations, answer questions, and give direction without having to pick up a phone, wait for someone to answer, or worse, for voicemail to greet me.

Other topics on my email screen are a possible meeting with our district's legislative members to talk about how they can help us in Olympia. Several invites (and e-vites) to upcoming auctions. Reminders of meetings that I am expected to attend this week, including agendas for those meetings. Several requests for me to be the master of ceremonies at scheduled events in the months ahead.

This week marked the arrival of the fall delegation from our Sister City of Hekinan, Japan. Their itinerary and the schedule of my interaction with them were, of course, emailed to me. This was a large group—24 visitors—and they had a great time, capped off by visiting downtown on Halloween night. While language can sometimes be a barrier, there are many common languages that were shared. The language of laughter is universal, and it seemed easy to communicate on that level. Some words were easily shared and understood as well; "Mariners" and "Ichiro" come to mind. I even asked how

our former closer, Kazahiro Sasaki, was doing now that he was back in his homeland with his family. Apparently not well!

So, all in all, I guess you could say I'm a big fan of email and how it allows me to work more efficiently and expeditiously. I remember thinking that fax machines were so great just a few years ago, and now I can't help but wonder, what's next?